

Planning Commission of Peachtree City
Meeting Minutes
Monday, December 9, 2024
6:30 PM

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Scott Ritenour called the meeting to order and opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. Vice Chairman Kenneth Hamner, Andrew Kriz, Ray Liotta and Alternate Brett Hanes were also in attendance. Commissioner Felicia Reeves was absent. Also present were City Manager Justin Strickland, Assistant City Manager Christopher Hobby, Senior Planner Lora Hooks, Recording Secretary Martha Barksdale, and IT Specialists Elijah Brewer and Jameson Collins.

Additions or Deletions

None

Announcements and Reports

Strickland introduced the new Assistant City Manager, Christopher Hobby, and also gave an update on the Planning Commission's presentation to the City Council regarding a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). The Council agreed at the December 5th workshop that the UDO should move forward and planned to officially vote on it at the December 19th meeting.

Approval of Minutes

1. Planning Commission Meeting November 18, 2024

Liotta moved to approve the November 18, 2024 Planning Commission meeting minutes. Hamner seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Hearing

None

Old Agenda Items

None

New Agenda Items

1. Conceptual Site Plan & Elevations, Industrial Expansion, 407 Dividend Drive

Hooks showed an aerial photograph of the 4.1 acre site, noting that it was zoned General Industrial (GI). She said there were some incorrect numbers on the summary, but she would present the correct figures. They were proposing a two-story addition of 18,654 total square feet, which would bring the total building area to 44,545 square feet. The number of parking spaces required was based on square footage. A total of 92 were required, and they would be providing 93.

The setbacks were 50 feet in the front, 20 feet on the side, and 50 feet in the rear. The property included an existing warehouse, limited parking and a loading court, along with a storage shed in the side setback. That shed would be demolished, and confirmation of removal would be required before any other permits could be

issued.

There was one existing access point, and they planned to improve the entrance with new paving and curbing. During the site plan review, the City Engineer indicated a possible need to shift the location of the access point in order to meet Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) standards to achieve optimal traffic flow. Staff had made it a condition of approval that the developers work with them on this.

The landscape buffer for Dividend Drive was 50 feet, but the applicant was asking to reduce that to 30 feet to allow room for the new parking lot. Approval would require additional landscaping that amounted to at least 20 percent of the caliper inches of trees required by the landscape ordinance. Some additional tree-save areas on the site would also reduce the number of trees required by up to 25%, but they wouldn't know the specifics until later in the engineering process, Hooks explained. This would be reviewed by the Planning Commission during the landscape plan approval process.

Because Dividend Drive was a major thoroughfare, an architectural review was required. Hooks presented elevations of the proposed building, noting that it would be constructed mostly of steel and faced with a combination of brick and metal panels. To maintain the pedestrian scale for the two-story addition, the massing of the architecture was defined by a change in materials, a change in plane, and varying heights. Several soldier courses of brick that projected from the building would add dimension.

The ordinance said front facades should be 80% primary materials, and side facades should be at least 50% primary materials. The proposal was for 70% brick on the front facade, 60% on the left side, and 69% on the right side. The existing portion of the building was 100% brick on the remainder of the left side and metal on the remainder of the right side. A neutral color palette was proposed, with dark brown brick, charcoal gray metal panels, windows of black anodized aluminum, and a black awning over the front door.

Staff was of the opinion that the conceptual site plan and building elevations met the requirements of the City ordinances and design standards and recommended approval with the following condition:

1. Work with the City Engineer to determine the best location for the curb cut to achieve optimal traffic flow on Dividend Drive

Jason Rogers represented the applicant. Hanes asked about an overhead power line at the entrance, and he wondered if consideration had been given to the aerial fire apparatus access that would now be required? Rogers said they had not done a study, but Hooks noted that the Fire Marshal would review the engineering

drawing and would catch that.

Liotta asked what prevented trees that were counted in the tree save area from being demolished at a later date? Hooks noted that if the trees were of a certain size, they would need a tree removal permit, but the ordinances did not address smaller trees.

Ritenour said he didn't recall it ever having come up, and Hooks remarked that tree-save areas were not common. Liotta said he hoped the City would tell anyone who removed trees after using the tree-save reduction that they would have to give them back.

Liotta asked about the business. Rogers said this was a construction management firm that had grown over the past decade. They were currently in about 9,000 square feet, and this would double that. However, Rogers said many more parking spaces were required than they needed.

The ordinance required a 50-foot landscape buffer, and they were asking for 30 feet, Liotta remarked, and it looked like a portion of those 30 feet was in a Georgia Power easement. Was that not a plantable area, he asked, and Hooks said it was not.

Liotta asked if they had looked at angled parking as a way get more spaces into less square footage so they didn't need the buffer reduction? They hadn't, Rogers responded.

Liotta then asked about how much of a landscape buffer adjacent properties provided? The property across the street was similar in setback and parking spaces, and its adjacent tract was undeveloped, Rogers told him, adding that next door, the building was brought up to the setback. Rogers said their building was the only one that allowed for additions on the front because of the buffers. Ritenour agreed that there were several buildings that were on or near the setback line.

Liotta said his concern was with the many requests to reduce the landscape buffers they received, which was not consistent with what Peachtree City desired. Ritenour said it was common on Dividend.

Strickland had found something on the tree-save area in the ordinance. He said the City Arborist could visit the site to mark and document specimen trees. The City could issue a citation if any of those trees were removed without a permit. Of course, that meant the City would have to catch it.

Hanes asked Rogers if they had sought an administrative variance regarding parking. They could get a variance to eliminate 25% of the requirement, which would be 23 spaces, about equal to the front row of parking. That would mean they wouldn't need to reduce the landscape buffer. Strickland said that was an option,

and noted an administrative variance did not go to full Council, but to a committee of two staff members and a Council member. Rogers said he would be in favor of that, as long as it didn't slow them down. There was still a process, Strickland assured him, just not as long as for a regular variance.

Hooks pointed out that the variance would not be for the buffer reduction, but for the reduction in parking spaces. Strickland said it would be cleaner if they applied for an administrative variance to lower the number of parking spaces, then returned to the Planning Commission for site plan approval.

Liotta again said angled parking might allow for the same thing, but with the same number of spaces. Hooks said 60-degree angled parking would allow reduction of the drive aisle to 18 feet, a reduction of six feet per aisle. Liotta said he felt the 90-degree spaces were more manageable for the public. He was just trying to think of ways to retain the buffer.

Hooks pointed out areas where parking spaces could go, but it would be difficult.

Kriz said he liked the idea of them applying for the administrative variance if they did not need those parking spaces. Maybe they could approve this with the condition that they apply for the variance. If it was not granted, they agreed to put a significant amount of spaces in the back, working with staff to eliminate as much of the front row of parking as possible. He confirmed with Hooks that the Planning Commission did not have the discretion to reduce parking.

Ritenour agreed with that proposal.

The cleanest way would be to conditionally approve this with the direction that they apply for a variance with a reduction of 25% of the parking spaces, Strickland said. Ritenour asked when an administrative variance hearing could be held. Strickland said the advertising requirement was 30 days, and the committee would meet after that. It would be the second week in January before that could happen, Ritenour stated.

Rogers said several things were being held up until he got this approval.

Liotta suggested they approve this as submitted, with the requirement that there be no tree fund use. Hooks commented that would be difficult on an industrial site with grading required. Rogers said they wanted it to look good and would put trees anywhere they could be. There were untouched woods behind the building.

Strickland said if they approved it, they had to be good with the plan even if they didn't get the variance. Rogers said he wanted the variance. Strickland said he wanted them to be able to work with staff without being bound by some kind of convoluted requirement in the motion to approve.

Hooks suggested a motion saying they had to meet the parking requirement by relocating spaces, and if they couldn't do that, they would have to apply for an administrative variance. Rogers said he could find somewhere to put 20 spaces and would work with staff.

Liotta then said he liked the building.

Kriz moved to approve the conceptual site plan and elevations for 407 Dividend Drive with the condition that the parking spaces closest to Dividend Drive be eliminated from the final plan and that they work with staff to relocate them elsewhere on the property. He also added the condition from the City Engineer regarding the location of the curb cut. Hamner seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Landscape Plan, Kopper's, 635 HWY 74 S

Kopper's had submitted a landscape plan for its expansion. Hooks explained that this expansion had always been part of the plans for this property, which was the former Osmose building, and the conceptual site plan was approved about 10 years ago. The Planning Commission recently had approved a waiver of elevation review because the addition was not visible from the road.

The development area contained 18,364 square feet of new impervious surface; therefore, according to the landscape ordinance, a minimum of 54 caliper inches of overstory trees and 36 inches of understory trees were required. They were proposing 36 inches of canopy trees and 27 inches of understory trees. Hooks noted there was not a lot of space for planting in the development area. Since the total requirement was not being met, the tree fund alternative compliance method was being requested for 30% of the trees. Hooks said staff felt they had met the requirement that all trees reasonably possible would be planted.

Engineer Jason Walls of Highland Land Planning represented the applicant. Hamner asked if the trees were native to Georgia, and Walls said they were.

Liotta noted they were short 11 trees but several areas were just open lawn. Why couldn't trees be planted there? Walls said those areas were used for testing and observation of materials. Walls also pointed out that this area was well-screened and would only be seen by people in the complex. Liotta said he understood.

Hamner moved to approve the landscape plan for Kopper's, 635 Highway 74 South. Hanes seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Landscape Plan, West GA Dermatology, 112 Wilshire Village Drive

West Georgia Dermatology was in the Wilshire Pavilion area, zoned General Commercial (GC) with conditions. For the amount of impervious surface, 31,809 square feet, the landscape ordinance required a minimum of 95 caliper inches of canopy trees and 63 caliper inches of understory trees. The Planning Commission

approved a buffer reduction for this property from 50 feet to 30 feet, which added a requirement of an additional 20% of caliper inches, bumping the total requirement to 114 caliper inches of canopy trees and 76 inches of understory trees. The proposal was for 81 inches of canopy trees and 52 inches of understory trees and included some 4-inch caliper trees to bring the amount provided up to 70%. The tree fund alternative compliance method had been requested because the total tree requirement was not met.

The conditions called for a minimum 30-foot landscape buffer along Rockaway Road and a minimum 25-foot buffer adjacent to the Somerby property, and those were provided. A combination of berms and landscaping were required to provide a permanent vegetative buffer. Because the development was higher than the road and adjacent property, the buffers sloped down to the property line and included a mix of hardwood species, thus meeting the intent of the ordinance requirement, Hooks stated.

Staff was of the opinion that the requirements of the ordinance were met and recommended approval.

Hamner again asked Walls if these were native plants, and he said he believed they were. Hamner then pointed out an area with no plantings, and Walls explained that there was a cart path, a drainage ditch, and a pipe in that space. Another area Hamner indicated was earmarked for the sign in the future. Hamner said he was just trying to make sure all the trees possible were being planted and that the building was well screened from the road.

Kriz asked about other areas, and Walls said there was a channel there. Liotta indicated a sloped area. Walls said there were two ditches on either side of the cart path. Hamner said he believed they had maximized the space available.

Walls also pointed out they had added a note that said trees could not be moved without the Planning Department's approval and that they would like a pre-installation conference with Hooks on the site. At this conference, they could make adjustments in the field.

Liotta said he would like to see more overstory trees to shade the parking lot from the sun on the west side. He suggested the understory trees could be moved to the areas on the east side that Kriz had indicated, and that the overstory trees could be moved adjacent to the parking lot. Walls said branches from the larger trees might damage vehicles in the drive lanes and parking but could be pruned. He said he would have to check with the landscape architect but thought this would work. Walls confirmed that Liotta wanted four understory trees replaced with overstory trees at the main drive lane entrance and the understory trees moved to the slope.

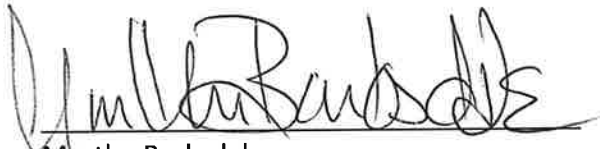
Ritenour said he was in favor of relocating the trees and seeing what could be added before going to the tree fund.

Liotta moved to approve the landscape plan for West Georgia Dermatology, 112 Wilshire Village Drive with the condition that four understory trees be relocated to the slope on the east side of the building, and overstory trees from the east side be relocated to the western side in order to shade the parking lot. Kriz seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Workshop Items

They had previously canceled the December 23rd meeting. The next meeting was scheduled for January 13th.

There being no further business, Kriz moved to adjourn at 7:40 p.m. Hamner seconded. Motion carried unanimously.



Martha Barksdale



Scott Ritenour